

(Continued from page 12.)

The Castle of Lies

BY ARTHUR HENRY VESEY

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CHAPTER XXX.—Continued.

"The papers from the safe, did you say?" asked Helena in slow wonder. "Perhaps you know that I was imprisoned in the room yonder. It took me three hours to loosen the bar of the window. I made my way round the sloping roof of the towers by the stone gutter to the window of that other room. The window was open. When I gained it and was about to enter it, I saw this man, whom I believed to be your brother, enter the room, bolt the door behind him, kneel at the safe, open it, and abstract from it a packet of papers which he now has in his pocket."

If Forbes had expected Helena to be dumfounded at this surprising news, his wish was gratified. But it was wonder tempered with infinite joy. The papers that convicted her brother of guilt had been rescued from the cruel clutch of Madame de Varnier. She did not realize at once that I had slipped clear of Charybdis only to fall foul to Scylla. The peril of Sir Mortimer's guilt being known was now infinitely greater than it had been all an hour ago. Helena's defense of myself, and Madame de Varnier's untimely interruption, had both alienated all sympathy from Helena and strengthened his conviction that I was one of the conspirators.

If I had kept silent so long, if it seems unlikely that I should have allowed a woman to plead in my behalf—it is because I was racking my brain for a means of escape from the awkward predicament that held me captive.

"I have told you, Captain Forbes, that I have ample reason to believe in the honesty of Mr. Haddon. If he has taken any papers from the safe, it is with my fullest and deepest gratitude. It was the woman there who had stolen them from my brother. They are personal papers. They concern only my mother and myself now that Mortimer is dead. Mr. Haddon will restore them to me."

"I shall forbid that," protested Forbes hotly. "I tell you, Miss Brett, those are papers of State. They belong to the State. I must see that they are placed in the hands of the ministers of the Foreign Office. For the last time, give me those papers."

I leaped at the loophole Helena had offered me. If I could not prevent their falling into the hands of Forbes, at least I could delay that dire event. "I shall obey you, Miss Brett. Into your hands alone shall I place those papers."

"If you please," she said with dignity, and held out a hand that did not tremble to receive them.

And still I hesitated. I saw the gleam of resolution in the glitter of Forbes' blue eyes. If I produced the paper now it would be only to have the king's messenger snatch them from my grasp. Forbes turned to Helena in angry triumph.

"You see, Miss Brett, he hesitates. The woman and himself are as reluctant as the papers fall into your hands as they are that I obtain them. He thinks that he may trick you, as he has already once tricked me. Is there nothing I can say to shake your blind confidence in this treacherous impostor?"

"Nothing," said Helena, with resolution; but I could see her troubled surprise at my reluctance.

"Then I shall be forced to resort to violence. I am going to have those papers, and at once. If you are so blind to the grave danger of letting this man keep the papers, even for the moment, I am not. How could he have taken them from the safe unless I were with the permission and perhaps at the entreaty of this Madame de Varnier?"

"The inference is clear enough, I should think—she must have left the door of the safe open."

Helena spoke confidently, but trust in me had been put to a sore test. "Your credulity is very great if you think that. Why, madam, I saw him deliberately work the combination of the safe."

Helena uttered a cry of horror at my supposed treachery. Her trust was shattered.

"I could not dream of a villainy so hypocritical."

Instinctively she came close to Forbes' side as if for protection. She had read in my eyes that Forbes spoke the truth. No words of mine could convince her now of my sincerity.

Madame de Varnier had been quite forgotten by us all. Until now she had been listening in breathless silence. Forbes' declaration that I had taken the papers must have seemed to her the sheerest absurdity. She had been certain that she had locked the safe; she was equally certain that no one but herself knew the word by which it might be opened. She must have thought, too, that my tacit confession of taking the papers was a ruse to deceive her, though she could not guess its purpose.

But when Captain Forbes asserted with evident sincerity that he had seen me working the combination her anxiety became unendurable. At the risk of being surprised at the safe, she had

stolen quietly to the room, thinking herself unobserved. But through our backs had been turned from the room. I had seen her movement by her shadow cast on the floor by the setting sun pouring in the open window through which Captain Forbes had made his entrance.

I clutched the arm of the king's messenger. I made an imperious gesture for caution and silence. I pointed to Madame de Varnier disappearing into the little room of the safe. With a motion incredibly light for so heavy a man Forbes tiptoed after her, and watched her open the safe through the half-closed door.

It was only a question of instants before she had thrown open the door of the safe with a cry of dismay. But that instant sufficed.

As Forbes turned his back to me I took swiftly from my pocket the two packets. One envelope was plain, with no writing on it. The other was addressed to Sir Mortimer Brett and bore a foreign stamp.

No word was spoken. I had but to hold the two packets before Helena. In an instant she had hidden in the bosom of her dress the first packet I have mentioned, whose envelope was plain; the other I returned to my pocket.

Madame de Varnier sprang to her feet with the litheness of a tigress. She came toward me as I stood by



"Take it!" She screamed. "Take it!" Forbes' side with a rage that was dreadful in its intensity.

Before I could guess at her purpose she had torn my coat open and seized the packet I had placed there. She pressed it into Forbes' hand. Her bitter rage and disappointment made her oblivious of the fact that she had given only one of the packets.

"Take it!" she screamed. "Take it!" Ah, Mr. Coward, you are clever, but it shall avail you nothing. At least I shall have my revenge."

Forbes buttoned his coat over the papers he had received with an amazed but grim satisfaction. Helena, standing apart from us, was convulsively clenching and unclenching her hands. Unseen by the other two, I cast her a meaning glance that she should exert her strong will to regain her poise. When they looked at her she stood passive and acquiescent. As for myself, I affected an air of chagrin and defeat.

"You will bear me witness, Miss Brett, that I did my best to place the packet in your hand. I can only hope that Captain Forbes will restore you those papers without reading them, or that they are of little importance."

"Little importance!" hissed Madame de Varnier. "Sir, guard those papers well; your ministers at Downing street will not thank you if you lose them. And now, Mr. Coward, that door of oak with its bands of steel is beyond my strength. As to the possibility of a descent from the outside, it is hopeless to think of it. Even if one existed, I should scarcely avail myself of it, leaving you with these people, Miss Brett."

"But Mr. Haddon—" "Is not to be trusted, I am afraid," said he, with a sneer.

My words were arrested on my lips. It means that Dr. Starva, the ally of this woman, for some purpose of his own, has imprisoned us here. I answered calmly. "Even you, Captain Forbes, will not accuse me of fastening the bolt."

He turned from me in contemptuous silence. "It is only a question of a few hours at the most," he said reassuringly to Helena. "At dawn we can attract the attention of some one from the street. In the meanwhile we must be patient."

"And they speak of honor among thieves!" he sneered in an aside to Helena. I feared that Helena might make an indignant protest. But she said nothing. I supposed her silence dictated by prudence; this was no time to champion my cause. But as I looked at her I read her perplexity in her troubled eyes. I had given her back the papers indeed, but that I should have known the combination was too startling a fact to be accepted without distrust. I could have known the combination only from Madame de Varnier; that proved to me to have been in her confidence. If I had repented and betrayed my accomplice in my remorse, she was grateful for the act itself, but she could no longer trust me.

"This woman says," Forbes was speaking to me, "there is nothing to detain us here longer. But you, sir, as well as this woman, will leave this room only to be placed under arrest. You must consider yourself my prisoner."

With these words he strode toward the door of the staircase, and turned the handle.

"It is locked," he said sternly. "Who has the key?"

I handed it to him in silence. As he received it from me he glanced meaningfully toward Helena. It was one more link in the chain of evidence. I confess I could have wished the key had not been in my pocket.

He turned the key. To the consternation of all of us the door still resisted his efforts. He exerted all his strength to no purpose.

"What new trick is this?" he demanded furiously of me.

"I think," it was to Madame de Varnier I answered, "that Dr. Starva has taken the precaution of insuring himself a free field."

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Ladder of Stones.

Madame de Varnier had been seated in sullen apathy. At my words she

looked up at me for a moment in dull surprise. Then, slowly, as if a mask had fallen over her face, an expression of horror and insensate fury disfigured her beauty. She rushed to the door; she shook it frantically; she beat on it futile blows.

"What does it mean, this locked door?" demanded Forbes of me once more.

"It means that Dr. Starva, the ally of this woman, for some purpose of his own, has imprisoned us here," I answered calmly. "Even you, Captain Forbes, will not accuse me of fastening the bolt."

He turned from me in contemptuous silence. "It is only a question of a few hours at the most," he said reassuringly to Helena. "At dawn we can attract the attention of some one from the street. In the meanwhile we must be patient."

"I am thankful that you were able to make your way to me," said Helena brokenly. "It would be dreadful to be here alone with my brother lying dead in that room."

"Are we to make no effort?" I demanded. "Surely in some way."

My words were arrested on my lips. Madame de Varnier had abandoned herself to her despair. As I spoke she looked up furtively, and then transfixed me with a glance of warning.

"If you can suggest a means, I am ready to listen," said Forbes. "But that door of oak with its bands of steel is beyond my strength. As to the possibility of a descent from the outside, it is hopeless to think of it. Even if one existed, I should scarcely avail myself of it, leaving you with these people, Miss Brett."

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"Mr. Haddon. It is hard to believe you guilty of treachery. In spite of everything, I wish to keep faith with you. Will you not explain to Captain Forbes until he sees fit to ask me for one?"

"I shall make no explanation to Captain Forbes until he sees fit to ask me for one."

"And I should refuse to believe any," said Forbes with contempt. "You say your brother is in that room. May I see him?"

She led the way to the oratory in silence. The door closed gently behind them. Madame de Varnier and I were alone.

"I hope you are satisfied, monsieur, with your adventure in this Castle of Happiness," she said with a hysterical sob.

"I am waiting for the climax," I answered significantly. "Is it to be a comedy or a tragedy?"

"Oh, God!" she raised her clenched hands in a gesture full of anguish. "It is I who am asking that."

"Why did you look at me in that manner. You wish to tell me something—to warn me?"

"The death-mask—" she whispered. Her emotion suffocated her. "Why should Dr. Starva have imprisoned us here, unless—"

"But Prince Ferdinand is not here at the chateau."

Her self-control vanished utterly. She clung to me in her despair. "Save him! Save him!"

"But Ferdinand is not at the chateau!" I repeated.

"Last night—in the music room—that death-mask!" She spoke incoherently, but her meaning was too clear. "You knew that he was coming here?"

"When you told me of the death-mask, when I saw the rage of Dr. Starva—I realized his danger. Yes, he was coming here—tonight. But I telegraphed him that at all costs he must not come. But if Dr. Starva by some means intercepted that telegram—"

"Who sent it?" I questioned anxiously.

"Jacques."

"Then your prince is doomed. It was Jacques who betrayed me your presence here. I thought it was because I bribed him sufficiently well. Be sure of this, he is Starva's creature."

"Heavens, how you torture me! But if this is true, why did he allow Sir Mortimer's sister to come to me? He must have known that you sent for her."

"With ourselves she would be safely out of the way. Dr. Starva is more ingenious than I have given him the credit of being. We are caught like rats in a trap."

"But you must save him!"

"Impossible!"

"Listen; it is not impossible. There is a ladder—not on this side, but beneath the window of the oratory."

Her eyes glittered in the semi-darkness. She placed a finger on my lips. I had cried out in my surprise.

"A ladder of a hundred feet or more! And it stands against the wall of the tower!" I exclaimed incredulously.

"Besides, if it were there, Captain Forbes must have seen it."

"This ladder, I call it so for want of a better name, is made of great stones half as long as one's forearm that project from the smooth masonry at intervals of a foot. The chateau is old, very old. In feudal times, with a stout rope, one might escape from the tower. But it is impossible! We have no rope. She wrung her hands.

"But if this ladder of stones reaches from roof to terrace, it would be simple enough without a rope. The stones are built out at regular intervals. How far are they apart?"

"At intervals of a foot, they reach in a straight line for 100 feet. But the chateau is 150 feet high. These stones begin at the roof. No one could drop that 50 feet to the marble terrace below and live. Yes; we are caught like rats in a trap."

"Fifty feet! It would mean a broken limb, if not certain death. But if a rope could be knotted of our clothing for half that distance!"

I went into the room through whose window the king's messenger had made his untimely entrance. I leaned far out of the window, shuddering. I was resolved to make the descent myself. Twice I had proved myself a coward. This was to be my chance, unless Forbes should stubbornly refuse to believe in the existence of Ferdinand's danger.

The moon was rising; it shed an unearthly light on the pale face of Madame de Varnier as she looked up at me anxiously. The wind came in fitful gusts.

Suddenly there sounded a muffled report. At first I thought it thunder in the far-away mountains. But as I listened intently the mysterious sound was repeated again and again, though more and more feebly. And it came from above.

"Do you hear it, that strange, muffled clap?" I asked of Madame de Varnier.

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SOLVING THE LABOR QUESTION.

By the Rev. Charles Steitzle.

Shall we abolish the labor union hoping thus to solve the labor question? Common sense and practical experience says no. The trades union has become a fixture in our industrial life. It has come to stay. It is simply a question as to whether it will be a good unionism or a bad unionism. In various ways, good workmen are to be deprived of their membership in the trades union, it will result in a bad unionism, because the unscrupulous will thus be left in control. But, on the other hand, the best employees are encouraged to identify themselves with this movement, it will result in a good unionism. It would seem to be the part of wisdom, then, to develop and not to attempt to destroy the trades union.

Furthermore, those who seek to destroy the trades union, hoping that thereby they will solve the labor question, forget that trades unionism is not the labor question. It is simply one of the expressions of the labor movement. It is not the cause or industrial agitation but the outcome of it. If every labor union were to be wiped out today, the labor question would still be with us, and probably in a more aggravated form. The trades union will not be destroyed until something better takes its place, and the better system will come as a further result of the evolution which produced the trades union.

It is supposed by some that Socialism will eventually supersede trades unionism. It is altogether likely that Socialism will play a prominent part in the world's industrial drama, but Socialism must not flatter themselves that because a change in our economic system is probable, therefore Socialism must necessarily become the prevailing system. In the end there will be not one answer to the social question, but many, but they will all agree in this: all of them will be religious. The social question is fundamentally a moral and a religious question. It will never be settled upon any other basis. Because this is true, the church will have an important part in its solution. The church must have a clear message with reference to the principles involved. The preacher need not discuss social theories, but he must present in the pulpit the prophet, the supreme laws of love and justice and service, and apply them to present day questions. He should speak with no uncertain sound concerning the evils of child labor of the unsanitary conditions in sweat shop and home, of the curse of Sunday labor, and everything else that is preventing the masses from living the abundant life which Christ came into the world to give them.

UNIONISM.

Almost since the beginning of the history of the human race the "union," in some form, more or less crude, and known by various names, has existed, and the causes for its existence have shown themselves in many ways; but the causes themselves are few, and have always been the same—plutocracy, greed and selfishness. These have always been, in all ages, men who, through selfishness, desired to rule that they might satisfy their thirst for gain, and having succeeded in this to a greater or less degree, have segregated into a class by themselves, and through the power of gold, have held themselves superior to their less fortunate brethren, and by those very acts, have caused the less fortunate to turn to each other for mutual help and protection, to unite against the encroachments of the others. Hence, then, we may say that unionism is, first, a bond, or binding influence, exemplified through the medium of the visible organization. We, each of us, in our particular lines of work, are standing alone, and working for our individual selves to the injury of our fellow workmen and, in reality, working against our own welfare. Thus coming to realize the futility of such conduct, and feeling the necessity of closer relations with each other in our particular lines of work, and seeing the results attained by the "plutocrat" in his endeavor to kill competition, a few men "got together" and framed what is known to-day as the Union. Then others in different localities banded themselves together in like manner, and each other in our particular lines of work, and seeing the results attained by the "plutocrat" in his endeavor to kill competition, a few men "got together" and framed what is known to-day as the Union. 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